

Jessica Johnston



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“yorta itjumatj woka, yorta itjumatj bawu”

My artwork, titled “yorta itjumatj woka, yorta itjumatj bawu”, meaning Healthy Country, Healthy Body in Yorta Yorta Language, depicts the intrinsic connection between the health of indigenous people and country. The story of my artwork begins at the edges of the canvas where there is land and waterways painted. They begin with wide openings to represent the mouth of the water source and the vast spread of land Australia has. These parts of my painting also incorporate journey lines, which travel toward the inner part of the canvas, representing the impact that these factors have on Indigenous Australians. Each section includes symbols that contribute to the health of first peoples, which include the land to meet on, animals tracks representing a source of food, and footprints to represent travel and journey. I have also incorporated a piece of my culture by including the long neck turtle within the waterways of my artwork, symbolising the totem of the Yorta Yorta people. The incorporation of this also represents that in addition to sustenance, country also provide totems that link indigenous people directly to culture and dreaming. As we reach the centre of my artwork you begin to see some colour fade with some darker shades emerging through the artwork, this incorporates the underlying concept that if our country is damaged, it impacts indigenous peoples livelihood and health. Around the centre of the canvas, there are symbols of gathering which represent the coming together of different mobs to share stories. This also represents the impact that country has on these mobs, with the surrounding of the land and water colours throughout. In the centre of the canvas, an indigenous elder sits and plays the didgeridoo. The man is presented as colourless until he begins to play the didgeridoo in which colours of red, blue, and yellow begin to appear, depicting land, waterways, and country. This represents the stories and culture from the elder, as he passes it down through the mobs and down generations. This symbolises the importance of culture to indigenous peoples heritage and identity and how Indigenous peoples' connection to Country is inseparable from their Dreaming. The entire concept behind my artwork is the depiction of how the health of first peoples are intertwined with the health of their country, as they rely on it for well-being, sustenance, and identity.